

WILLMAR PARKS & RECREATION BOARD
APRIL 17, 2019

subject to approval of the Board

Members Present: Jim Anderson, Tom Gilbertson, Rand Middleton, Andy Ogdahl, Val Swanson and Julie Asmus, City Council Representative

Staff Present: Rob Baumgarn, Eric Banks, Britta Diem, Curt Hein, Ryan Scheffler and Becky Sorenson

Guest Present: Richard Engan

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Jim Anderson. The first item on the agenda was approval of the Board minutes from the March 20th meeting. Val Swanson made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Tom Gilbertson. Richard Engan mentioned that we are two weeks behind the schedule for the four season shelter. Motion carried.

The second agenda item was a continuation of the Robbins Island four season shelter discussion. Jim Anderson stated that this is a hot seat item. He asked for Julie Asmus' guidance because this will be going to the Council and we want it to be as clear as possible. Since the first two proposed shelter designs were not acceptable, the first proposal having a couple of blind spots that were deemed a problem and being over budget and the second design being deemed too small, Richard Engan was present to show two more designs.

Rob Baumgarn stated we have four decisions to make during this meeting. 1) Do we want the shelter be a programming or non-programming shelter? 2) What size? 3) Funding? 4) Recommendation to the City Council.

Richard Engan passed around handouts to everyone and spoke about various aspects of the four season shelter. The park plan started with Vision 2040. One of their main goals was to have things for kids to do. The Master Park Plan and Robbins Island Master Plan were developed from this. Richard stated that some of the things that were brought up were year round activities such as cross country skiing, ice skating, kayaking, paddle board, etc. Whether we implement is a decision that needs to be made. Jim Anderson mentioned the high cost of the facility with the equipment rental option. If we decide to downsize, the equipment rental could be built at a different spot at a later date.

Richard stated that he was told to proceed with the Master Plan as a vision of what could be for a four season shelter. Rarely is the Master Plan set in stone and everything is implemented. There are usually many changes made before the final plan is complete. The proposal was to create year round activities which would mean that winter activities need a place to warm up. What this Board needs to decide is if Willmar should have expanded programs, ie equipment rental.

As discussed at the last meeting, Plan A was above the money set aside for the project with Plan B's rental space was smaller than Guri's rental space. The location also had to be changed due to soil borings showing up as unstable for building. The new location is further north and west, up the hill slightly, a few trees will need to be removed to be able to build on more stable ground.

The new floor plan has a community room with a fireplace that was moved to an interior wall instead of the outside wall, restrooms with access from the outside and inside along with a couple of inside family restrooms, mechanical area and office/storage area. If this is to be used during the winter, a warming area should be

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included. What needs to be decided is whether the shelter should be a community room for rental only with restrooms or if the office, equipment rental space, and warming house should be included. It would not be a good idea to have the community room doubling as a warming house because of the mess of ice/snow melt, creating more clean-up in order for the community space to be ready for rental.

Julie Asmus asked if the community room in the new plans was bigger than the first drawing. Richard stated there might be a few extra feet in square footage, the room is longer but narrower. Plan D features two multiple restrooms with both outside and inside access, two family restrooms-one with outside access and one with inside access. There is also a custodial room along with a small storage room with a ship's ladder access to the attic where the mechanical room will be placed.

Jim Anderson stated that this design is a lot like Rice Park. Richard agreed and said that the outside doors for the restrooms will be locked in the winter and only accessible from the inside. The roof was originally considered to be a hip style but has been decided to be a gable instead to raise the ceiling height in the Community Room and to allow for an upstairs mechanical room which will save floor space. It will be a wood frame building with a masonry exterior.

Richard then discussed the probable construction costs. Plan A was originally priced at \$952,650 last year. Plan B came in at \$498,000. It was estimated to go out for bids last July. Plan C included Community Center rooms which were deemed not feasible so were eliminated. Plan D was the revised version, taking Plan A and removing the disputed corners. Plan E is a smaller version of D with the rental/office space and warming area removed. The 2019 cost for Plan D is \$1,131,600 and \$852,000 for Plan E. The cost for trails, plaza and design and engineering would add \$350,060 to the costs for both Plan D and E. If Plan D is chosen, the City would need to come up with an additional \$642,660 and \$383,060 for Plan E.

Discussion followed regarding use of the building, do we want a programming aspect attached to the building and, if so, will the City staff the building or contract out to someone else. Rob stated that he feels we need to be cost conscious. If we eliminate the programming aspect, we could always add equipment rental at a later date and use Open Shelter #1 as the site. Val Swanson asked if Rob was saying we didn't have enough funds for a programming shelter. Julie Asmus stated that it would cost about \$200,000 more to include the programming portion. She also questioned what we would do for a warming house area if we went with Plan E. Richard responded that they could make a plan that works, we just need to decide what we want.

Rand Middleton has reservations about how big an attraction an ice rink and cross country ski trails would be. He feels that money should go to where the strength of Robbins Island is, between April and September. He also thinks there is a need for a sliding hill which could be created on Robbins Island's hills.

Ryan Scheffler talked about Garfield warming house and the difficulties of finding staffing. He questioned the plans for a programming shelter at the Island, asking if the shelter was going to be open or if it would only be open with staff. He stated that there were very few skaters utilizing the ice at Garfield and doesn't see parents driving their kids to the Island for skating. Rand responded that Willmar is not the outdoor skating area it once was and not big into cross country skiing either.

Rob stated he thinks the Celebrate the Lights during Christmas is where people started thinking about having other activities at the Island. Richard stated there was talk about having a walking path so people could get out of their cars and walk the lights.

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Tom Gilbertson talked about serving on the Robbins Island task force. During open community meetings discussing Robbins Island upgrades, he said he heard no one saying that they didn't want the skating rink or they didn't want cross country skiing. He feels it is not up to this Board to decide what the public wants because the public wants these features at the Island. He also stated that he didn't feel it was up to the Board to decide on staffing issues, that it was Rob's responsibility. As far as the building goes, we can build it twice, once now inadequate to our needs or we can build it right once and the City Council needs to come up with the money. He stated the City Council has neglected the Island for 15 years so he feels it's time to put some money into it.

Jim Anderson asked if Tom was recommending Plan D. Tom responded he was in favor of either Plan D or A. The problem with A was the corners which Engan has remedied. Richard stated the cost listed for Plan A was the 2018 cost and 10% would probably need to be added. Tom stated that it will be cheaper to do it now. Jim agreed and stated that anything we look at we need to go to the City Council and ask them for more money. Jim stated that otherwise it's not going to happen as we don't have enough money unless we scale it back. Jim said that Tom Gilbertson has stated that the public does not want the scaled back version. Rob said he thinks we should have two plans to present to the City Council. Tom Gilbertson disagreed.

Discussion continued regarding which plan, A or D should be presented. The original Plan A had a warming area on the west side which created a corner that Public Works did not want due to sight problems and vandalism concerns (as discovered with Rice Park Shelter). Plan A was revised to remove the warming area entirely and leaving an open area on the southeast side. Plan D is fairly similar to Plan A but the southeast side was enclosed for a warming area with a hallway on the north side of it leading to the door for the community room and the rental area along with the restrooms.

Rob stated he was concerned about the budget. The costs for the construction do not take into account furnishings for the community room and, if we go with the equipment rental, we would need to purchase ice skates, cross country skis, paddle boards. This would be very difficult from the budget standpoint. Also, do we want to have the rental so near the community room. Park & Recreation will get the complaints from community room renters that there was too much disruption. The question was asked if recreation offerings were important or if we were going to run a wedding shop. Rob stated that the shelter will be reserved every weekend by various groups for reunions, anniversaries, birthday parties, etc. A statement was made that we are not in the business of party rentals. A question was then asked why we should even have a shelter if that was the case.

Jim Anderson stated that if we present Plan A or D, we are not locked into the programming issue. The main thing is to present a plan to the City Council. If we make a decision to get into the programming, we can and if not, we can always look for a vendor to handle that.

Jim stated that, if everyone of this Board agreed on a design and the City Council loved it, the next step would be finding the money to pay for the project, which he understands is a controversial issue. But Jim stated that is not our position but the City Council's job.

Julie Asmus mentioned at the last Finance Committee there was discussion about the shelter. This committee needed to know if funds were available. The issue was a back and forth discussion. The Finance Committee stated they couldn't give an amount available until they knew what the cost would be. This committee said they couldn't come up with a site and plan unless they knew how much they had to spend - \$800,000 or \$1 million and, is there money available? That didn't get answered.

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The legacy grant was \$606,000. The City Budget had \$75,000 set aside for the shelter along with \$175,000 local match from the City. At the last City Council meeting, Julie explained that the mayor had set aside \$250,000 total towards the shelter, knowing that the cost was going to be over, and was upset because \$17,000 had been taken out for lights.

Discussion followed regarding Plan A or D, do we want a square building (as D is) or one with the open area on the southeast (as A is). A question was asked if we were sure that the community room would be regularly rented during the season. Rob replied yes, Saturdays and Sundays would be booked. Becky Sorenson stated that Guri is the shelter everyone wants and another shelter like Guri could easily be reserved for each weekend also. Someone asked what kind of rentals were booked. Becky responded that family reunions, bridal or baby showers, birthday parties were the main rentals. Most of these groups would prefer to have the space for their party, not sharing with kayak renters, etc. If the kayak rentals were housed out of Open #1, that would be closer to the boat dock for launching the kayak into the water.

After more discussion, Jim Anderson asked if anyone wanted to make a motion as to how to proceed. Julie asked if we wanted to have a vote or show of hands as to which plan was preferred. Jim asked if someone had a motion. Richard stated it would be best if we didn't have more than two options to present to the City Council. Jim asked Tom for his opinion. Tom stated he preferred Plan D although he liked Plan A's price. Richard stated that Plan A's price was a year old so the cost would be closer to Plan D. Tom Gilbertson made a motion that the Park and Recreation Board support Plan D. Val Swanson seconded the motion. Jim stated he wanted Julie Asmus to inform the City Council that this recommendation is building for the future. Jim said he thought it was a good idea to have only one choice for the Council. After some further discussion, Jim asked for a vote on the motion. Motion carried.

The next item on the agenda is the baseball/softball field policies. Rob stated he and Eric have been working with the user groups to develop a field policy for next year. The baseball and softball groups liked the idea of having input into the field usage agreement.

The coordinator's reports were emailed. If anyone on the Board has any questions, now is the time to bring them up. Ryan stated that the Timberwolves are coming to look at the Miller Park court. Voting opens on April 29 so people can go online and vote for Willmar to get one of the updated courts.

Other Business—Becky Sorenson brought up the scholarship program. The question is whether kids need to reside in Willmar City limits or Willmar School District. After some discussion, the consensus was to continue as Community Ed & Rec and now Community Ed does which is the School District.

Britta talked about the bike share program and said it was going to be introduced at the Mayor's Bike Ride. She gave an explanation of the program and encouraged people to get involved.

Curt Hein stated that the new baskets for Frisbee golf have been delivered and will be installed soon.

As there was no further business, Tom Gilbertson made a motion to adjourn. Julie Asmus seconded. Motion carried.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, May 15, 2019 at 1:30 pm at the Civic Center Arena